



Information Bulletin

*Governor's Office of Emergency Services
Law Enforcement Branch*

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RESPONSE TO A SUICIDE/HOMICIDE BOMBING SCENE

May 22, 2002

PREFACE

This is the first in a series of Information Bulletins dealing with the topic of suicide/homicide bombings. It should be noted that there is no current, specific intelligence that would lead to a belief that such attacks are imminent in this country, though statements have been made by federal officials that these could indeed occur in the United States. This Information Bulletin contains information gained from federal, state and local public safety sources with expertise in explosives and response to explosives incidents. As with any public safety issue, local agencies must determine local policies and procedures. Note that a subsequent Information Bulletin will be issued, to include information for use when responding to a suspected bomber, if the call is received prior to an actual detonation.

FIRST RESPONSE – BOMBING HAS OCCURRED

- Render aid to injured victims and evacuate them from the area. Consider local Mass Casualty Incident protocols and initiate same.
- Notify the nearest office of the FBI, as an act of terrorism falls under their statutes.
- Do NOT approach the suspect or suspect's remains. There may be undetonated or partially detonated explosives present or a secondary device(s). Leave first approach to the suspect for the bomb squad no matter how long the wait for their arrival.
- Establish as large a crime scene perimeter as practical. General rule: immediately look for the furthest blast debris/damage from the blast center, and then DOUBLE that distance as a minimum crime scene perimeter. If after initially establishing a perimeter, increase size if it seems it might be too small. Do NOT decrease crime scene perimeter until the bomb squad concurs with this decision.

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- Be aware of the possibility of secondary devices and limit scene access to those that must enter. The bomber may have been a lure to get emergency personnel to a site where another bomb(s) is planted and waiting. The bomb squad will conduct a scene search for secondary devices upon their arrival.
- Establish a command post out of the immediate area; begin building the ICS organization needed to manage this emergency.
- Limit vehicle and personnel access into and out of the blast area/crime scene. Freeze the scene as much as possible. Do not allow responders to linger within the crime scene. Go in for a specific purpose and get out.
- Establish a record of all crime/blast scene entries including Fire and EMS. If possible, record locations and pertinent information on moved victims and where they were located. Indicate which hospitals victims are transported to. Identify and record all emergency vehicles that enter and leave the blast scene. Leave emergency vehicles in place that are/were inside the blast/crime scene if at all possible, until the bomb squad can determine they are safe to move and moving them will not destroy evidence.
- Vehicle tires and shoes can pickup or damage key blast evidence.
- Take overall scene photographs as soon as possible. Do not wait for crime scene specialists before initiating overall scene photographic documentation.
- Make notifications to other federal, state, and mutual aid agencies as soon as possible. Await jurisdictional decisions (most likely this FBI) before initiating evidence collection. This will undoubtedly be multi-day crime scene investigation. More evidence is destroyed or overlooked by moving too quickly than by waiting. It is normal to wait hours or even a day before the crime scene is entered for post blast investigation.
- Do not allow any preliminary examination of crime scene debris formally or informally, even if it is put back the way it was found. Await a planned evidence collection operation.
- Plan on intensive media response and make provisions for it at or near the command post site.

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- To protect the blast/crime scene, call the FAA and close the airspace overhead for at least a one-mile radius. [91.137 FAR] This also protects aircraft should there be a secondary explosion. This prohibition could include an exclusion of law enforcement aircraft, as an officer safety precaution, based on this concern.
- While waiting for additional resources, concentrate on the identification and interviewing of witnesses and victims, and general investigation. Determine if the scene has pre-existing hazards or other special considerations.
- Homicide bombings *generally* do not create severe structural damage although any scene hazards should be preliminarily mitigated. Remote mitigation is recommended to preserve the crime scene (i.e., turn off damaged electrical or natural gas lines from outside the crime scene). If severe structural damage is suspected, consider calling structural engineer resources.
- Planning should include an expectation of immediate resource exhaustion. Definite procedures for calling in off-duty and mutual aid resource response must be in place to not only hold the scene, but also to handle unrelated calls for service for an extended period of time.
- The September 11th attacks demonstrated that agencies should be prepared for spontaneous civilian and emergency worker response to the scene, along with the media. Plans should take this into consideration so the scene can be protected and the safety of all those on site can be maintained. A firm perimeter is very important.

SUMMARY

A homicide bomber scenario has the overwhelming potential to create serious injury or death. Casualties should be expected. Therefore, first responders must react decisively but with extreme caution for their own safety as well as the safety of the public. Responders should be prepared for a fluid, dynamic situation rather than static one. First responders could be severely injured or even killed in a homicide bomber situation, so personal safety must be paramount. Further Information Bulletins on this, and other topics, will be forthcoming.

SOURCE INFORMATION

Most of the material in this Bulletin was provided by Nick Concolino, an Advanced Explosives Instructor for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and current member of the Yolo County Bomb Squad, at the request of OES. Others involved in EOD issues throughout country, including the FBI, also provided valuable information. Michael Guerin edited the material. The OES Law Enforcement Branch can be contacted at (916) 845-8700.